

This document details what you need to know to use the Partnership Bidding feature with BridgeBase so you can practice bidding with any of your partners.

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The target audience is players who have some familiarity with BridgeBase. This document will presume you have done the set up stuff and have a basic working knowledge of the software.

Please refer to the BridgeBase Getting Started document that was written as a training companion for users who have recently been trained in the use of online bridge services if you need assistance with installation of BridgeBase and the set up of your user account.

Also, refer to the BridgeBase Solitaire document which tells you how to play Solitaire on BridgeBase and also has details on how to subscribe to and use BridgeBase GIB Robots. You may want these as a feature in Partnership Bidding to provide some automated interference bidding.

You will quickly want to have saved constraints that you can reuse when have bidding sessions to save time recreating them. If possible, get a set of constraints in saved text files that you can copy into the Constraints folder under the BridgeBase folder on your BC.

The VBA will have such a set of files available on the VBA Bridge Resource CD for some major systems. Guess where you can get a copy...

Finally, it is possible to load deals into Partnership Bidding from the Bridge Movie function and control the hands presented. This topic will be addressed in a separate document.

Overview

Bridge Base Online is a free service offered to bridge players everywhere. You need to download and install the program before you can play bridge online or use the engine which will automatically display Bridge Movies and BridgeBase VuGraph. To do this simply go to:

www.bridgebase.com

Bridge Movies are used extensively as teaching aids and will be the standard for developing interactive teaching software in the future. Check out the public PCs in the VBA which provide examples of this software which you can use at any time.

The online bridge service runs 24/7 and rarely drops below 100 concurrent tables in play in the main bridge club. The member community is large (100,000+), active and multilingual.

BBO is a business and offers ACBL-Sanctioned club games as well as the occasional advertisement. To check the games out go to:

www.acbl.org

The service that we are addressing here, Partnership Bidding, provides the ability to create an online table and then have practice bidding sessions with your partner.

You can provide constraints to the hands thrown up that you can easily change. These constraints can be saved and then reused at a later date.

Such sessions are particularly good for a new partnership or for an existing one when you are trying to beef up your game for a National or major State Event.

You can also have a monitor who controls the sessions so that they can be used for team training or as a teaching aid to bridge professionals.

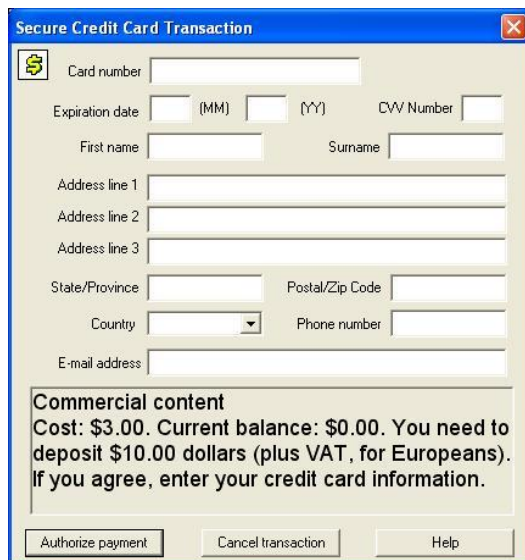
Buying Robots

At the time of writing, the ability to use Robots is being sold at \$3 per month per host.

In order to purchase the service as a host that wants to use Robots, do the following.

1. LogOn to BBO
2. Select **Shop Bridge** from the central toolbar.
3. Select **Purchase BBO\$ Bridge using PayPal** or **Purchase BBO\$ Bridge using SWREG** from the menu. This lets you add money to your account to purchase GIB Robots and to buy stuff from their shop. See below for a sample Credit Card Dialog.
4. When you have money in your BBO Account, select **Purchase bridge products** from the Shop Bridge Menu..
5. Select **Rental** from the next list. This may change a little as the service is evolving so select the most likely Usual Suspect if the name has changed...
When I wrote this, the Description for Rental was:
GIB – robots that play bridge.
6. Select **Use GIB for the next 30 days**. You can do it for a week but trust me, just risk the whole Three Bucks...

If you have decided to purchase BBO\$ using a credit card, you will be presented with the following screen:



Secure Credit Card Transaction

Card number

Expiration date (MM) (YY) CVV Number

First name Surname

Address line 1

Address line 2

Address line 3

State/Province Postal/Zip Code

Country Phone number

E-mail address

Commercial content
Cost: \$3.00. Current balance: \$0.00. You need to deposit \$10.00 dollars (plus VAT, for Europeans). If you agree, enter your credit card information.

Authorize payment Cancel transaction Help

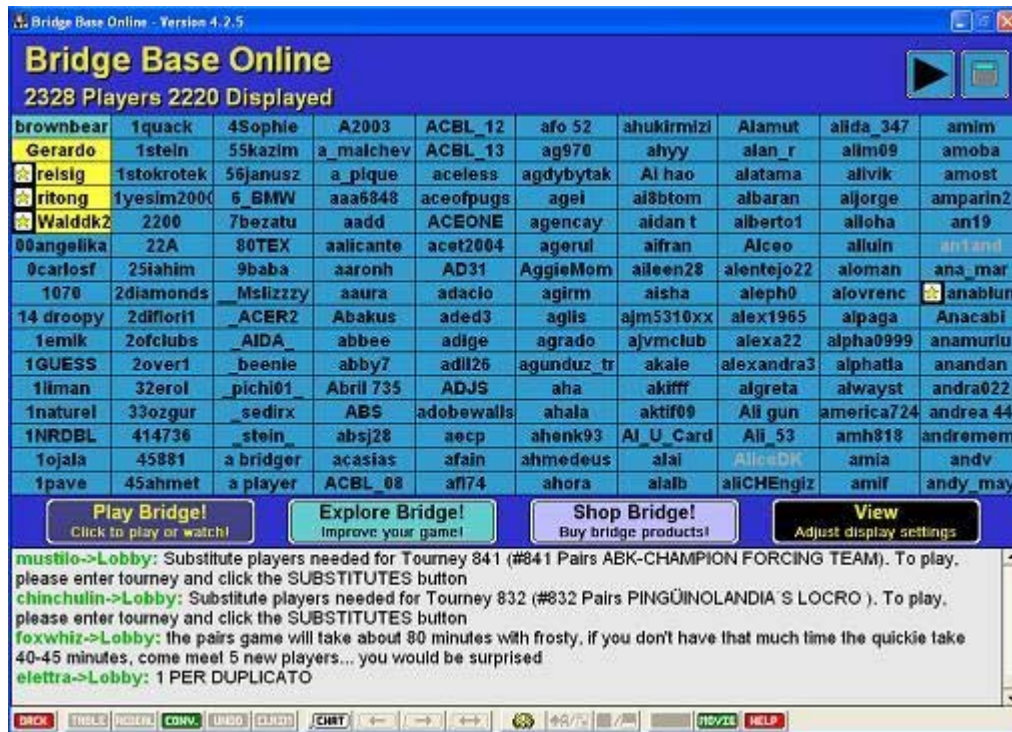
We have all seen one of these. Just fill it and pay your money. If this is OK then read the rest of the document.

When your rental runs out you go through the same procedure again. Sometimes, there will be enough money in your BridgeBase account to extend the rental. If there is, a dialog will ask you if you want to use another \$3 for another month of GIB. Say yes and the rental extension will be deducted.

If there is not enough for another month, you will have to top up your BBO\$ Account.

The Lobby

The Lobby is the main BridgeBase Screen. When you log on you are taken to the Lobby and everything happens from there. The screen shot below was taken at 9:30AM on a Friday. This is included here to remind you that everything starts from the Lobby.



Key features are:

1. **Players List.** Shows all current users. The Arrow top-right scrolls pages of players.
2. **Chat Log.** Basically always there. Shows who is talking. In the Lobby you see all public chat but at a table only the stuff that relates to you is shown. You can configure chat by changing your Personal Profile. To bring this up, double-click your username which is always the first name in the Lobby Names List in the top left hand corner of the screen.
3. **Toolbar.** There is always a toolbar on the bottom of the screen for common actions. The Help Button is useful for new players. The Chat Button is used to talk to people. The Back Button is very important – it sends you back to the previous screen you were on – this is how you leave a table or a function without quitting BridgeBase. The gear wheel is for your playing options.
4. **Play Bridge** Button. Provides access to the Main Bridge Club and online tournaments etc.
5. **Explore Bridge** Button. Provides access to *Partnership Bidding*, Chat Rooms, Bridge Base Standard, Learn to Play Bridge etc. These are interactive features other than normal bridge tables.
6. **View** Button allows you to make minor adjustments to what you see in the Lobby List and how the display is realised. Try it out by changing the options.

There are now a lot of places where there are context-sensitive menus like in a lot of other windows applications. Try the right mouse-click to see where you can get shortcut menus.

Partnership Bidding Room

When you click the *Explore Bridge* Button you get the following screen which allows you to watch games and access lots of bridge material. Our aim here is to get to the Partnership Bidding functionality. Select this item from the list.



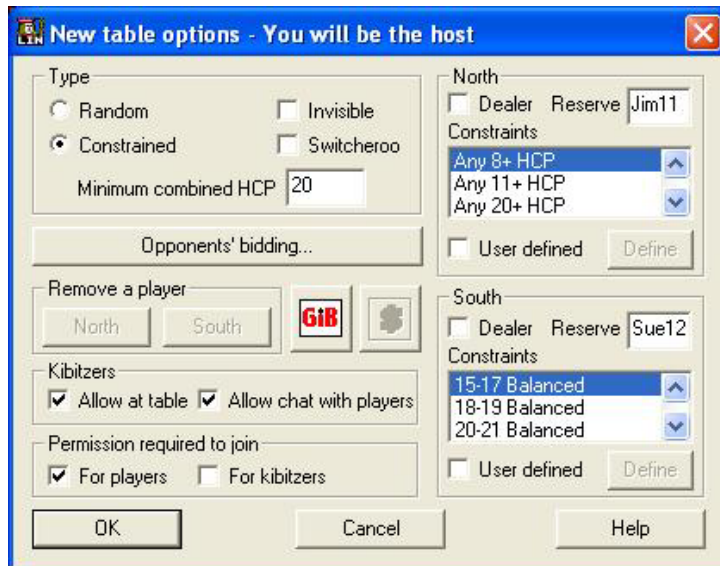
Now you will see the Partnership Bidding Room with a list of the current tables in action.



From here, click Start New Table and we are off.

Start a Bidding Table

The new table options will be displayed so you can set up as the host for your partnership. The sample below is for a user that is licensed to use GIB Robots. If you are not licensed, then the GIB Button will be greyed out on the options screen.



The Kibitzers and Permission options are similar to those available when you are playing a normal online game. Also, it will be normal for the Host to specify who is playing North and South.

There are two likely scenarios you would set up for Partnership Bidding and they are described in detail below. Note that the use of GIB Robots may well be an option for a session you want to run – if so the player who creates the table and wants to use GIB must have purchased a licence for \$3 per month. This is not much of a charge if you plan to use the feature regularly.

Also, it is important to specify something for the Opponents' Bidding unless you are bidding pairs of very strong hands. Bidding practice ignoring the opponents reasonable actions gives you a false picture of the effectiveness of your methods.

The following are suggested for setting the session:

1. The person who sets up the table needs to positively join the table – you must double-click your name title bar – this will get a response from BBO and swap your box to the bottom position
If you do not do this you will not see the bidding controls.
 This is not intuitive but you must remember to do it. Experienced computer users will get there by accident by clicking around to see what happens.
2. Always set some constraints after you have got used to the tool. Random as a setting isn't very productive – it is only useful at the start when you want to get used to the tool.
3. Use an independent Host to control the Opponents' Bidding or use GIB Robots to provide input. This is especially meaningful if your combined assets with your current constraint set have a minimum combined holding that can be in the part score zone.
4. Use it regularly. Failure to practice is a common failure of bridge players who are trying to develop their game and perform well at state or national level. Trust me...

Minor points are:

1. Always set Permission Required to Join for Players so that you don't get interlopers if you or your partner lose connection and have to rejoin.
2. Using Switcheroo is highly recommended for normal bidding so that the constraints are swapped at random between the two players.
3. Remember to set the Dealer option for you or your partner when setting a constraint that must be opener.

For Partnership Bidding, open the Options dialog and set the Keyboard Entry for Bidding/Play to true and see how you like it. You can still use the mouse but bidding via the keyboard for bidding practice is much quicker for some people.

It effects other things slightly but you should definitely try it out. When bidding via the keyboard, you must specify the level (1, 2 etc) before the denomination.

Finally, when you have finished setting up the table and click OK, you will be shown the table. Click on your name when the table appears as you are not automatically taken to a seat. This gets things started.

Also, if you have reserved a seat for your partner who has not logged in to BridgeBase yet, this activation will mean that partner will get a message when he logs on that there is a table waiting and he can click yes to go straight to the table and start bidding.

Knowing your partner's and teammates usernames and reserving tables properly makes things get going really quickly.

If your partner has already set up a table before you log on to BridgeBase and reserved a seat for you (the normal way to start a table), then when you log on you will see the following message:

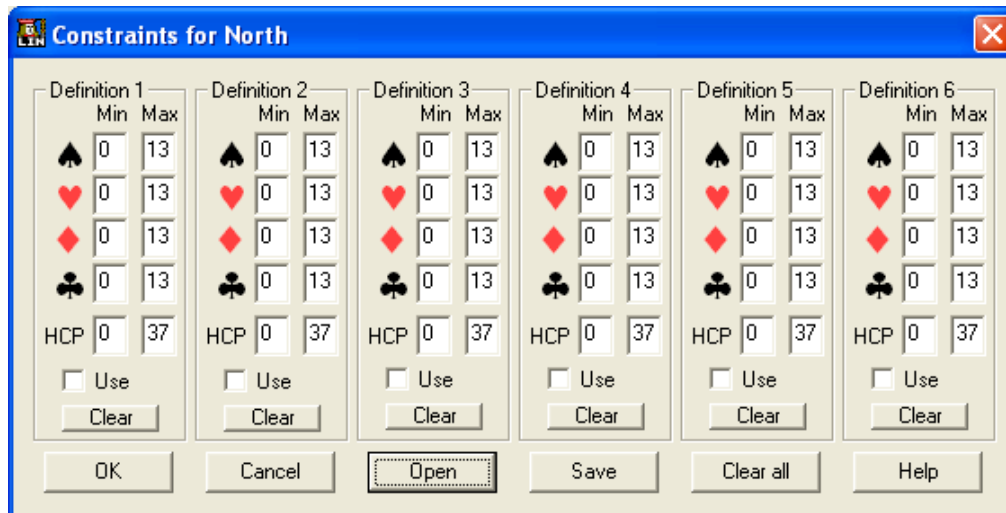


Just click Yes and you will be taken to the table and you can start bidding.

User-Defined Constraints

When you are starting a new table, the host has the option of setting constraints. The most common option will be to select User Defined. This is done by clicking the appropriate checkbox within North or South's options.

This will enable the Define Button to set the detailed constraints for the player. Click it and you will be presented with:



You can set up to 6 sets of definitions for one constraint using the dialog. If you like what you have created you can save it for reuse later. Remember that the saved file is only on your PC not the server. You must give a copy to your partner or others if they are to be able to use the constraint when they create a bidding table.

However, if you want to use a constraint that already exists, then click open and you can select from one of the files in the Constraints folder.

If you have a saved constraint for both hands you want to use, then setting up a table is very quick.

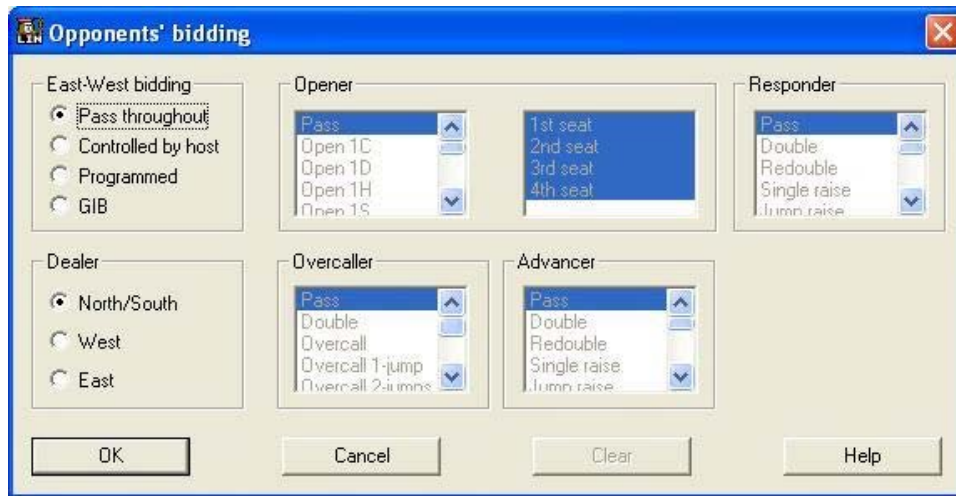
If you get serious about bidding practice you will end up saving a lot of constraint files to make your practice sessions flow quickly. If you do this, then you should create a naming convention for your constraint files and also a document with the names and meanings that you leave next to your computer.

As I have created constraint files for 3 different base systems, I have the system as part of the naming convention (Std as the first 3 characters means Standard and Acl as the first 3 characters means Acol).

Finally, I created one directory under the constraints directory for each base system and place the constraint files for that system in the directory. This makes it easier to find specific files.

Opponents' Bidding

This is the dialog that allows you to specify the way the opponents bid. Click the Opponents' Bidding button on the Table Options screen. This will present the following:



The Dealer Option may be appropriate in certain scenarios. Otherwise, just specify whether the Opponents' Bidding is controlled by the Host or by GIB.

Other Bidding Options are available but they will only be sensible for experienced users. Especially, making settings for Overcaller and Advancer are not straightforward and should only be used after checking things out with an experienced user.

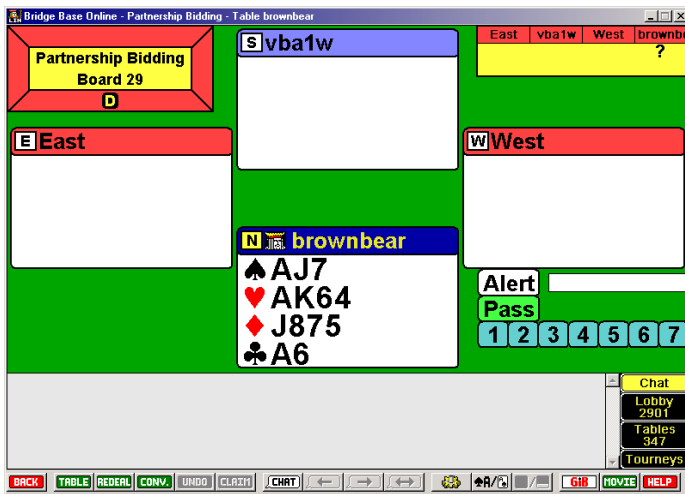
The way you set up this screen depends on what kind of practice you want to do and whether you are setting up for:

- Two-Player Practice
- Supervised Training Session

If you are doing constructive bidding, which is what most people use the tool for, you will mostly set the dealer to be North/South which is your partnership.

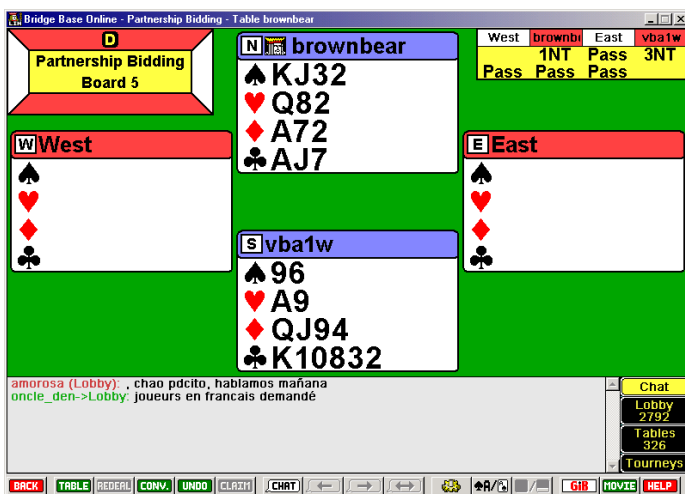
Normal Operation

Once the setup has been completed normal operation is simplicity itself. When the bidding controls are displayed make a bid. That is it. Bidding continues until one player passes.



There is an Undo Button which you can use to Undo your last bid. The table host can Undo bids for both players.

When you have completed an auction, both players will be shown both hands and the full auction as in the following screen shot:



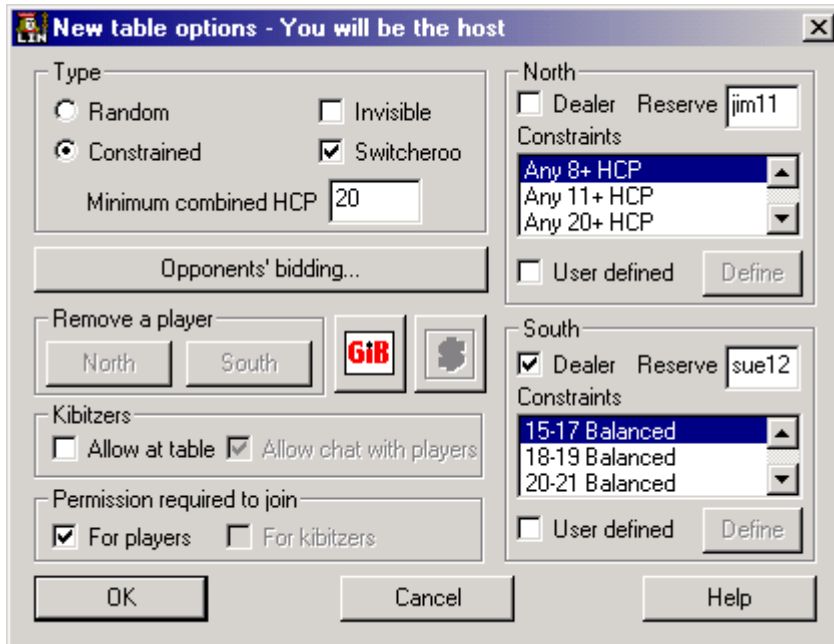
If there is something to discuss at this point then either player can start a chat. If there is nothing to say then the table host can hit the Redeal Button to get another deal. Sometimes, the partner of the host might decide the hand is boring and type redeal in the chat dialog to ask the host to redeal.

If the table host is unsure whether partner will want to discuss the hand, he can wait a few seconds before going to the next deal.

One last twist you might try is to set up a Skype Session between your computer and your partner's computer – then you can talk to each other (cost free of course) while running your bidding session.

Two Player Practice

Create a new table pretty much as in the dialog entries below.



You will normally specify the following:

1. Select Constrained rather than Random in the Type Options.
2. Specify a Minimum Combined HCP of at least 20. This will ensure that your partnership has something to bid. Don't make the count too high unless you are explicitly practising slam bidding.
3. Select Constraints from the lists for both of you. The sample above specifies a Strong 1NT Opening opposite 8+HCP so constructive bidding can be explored.
4. Click User Defined and then click Defined to bring up the Constraint Definition dialog for either or both players if you want to specify ranges of suit lengths or values. This provides a much finer definition than just selecting from the list. You should play with the tool a little before using this. Best of course is to use pre-defined constraints.
5. Specify Dealer if your Constraint pattern warrants this.
6. Click Opponents Bidding to set the options for the unseen hands. Normally the pair should have a host player with a GIB licence to create the table so GIB opponents can be specified. However, if you are practicing slam bidding, this won't matter much.
7. Set Switcheroo to True by clicking the checkbox. In the above setting, this means that the 1NT Opening hand that is created for each deal is randomly swapped between the two players. In certain practice scenarios, however, you may want to fix the constraints so that one player is always the opener – Set Switcheroo to False to achieve this.

The settings to allow kibitzers or not is completely up to you – there is no good or bad setting here.

Supervised Training Session

This is using the Partnership Bidding feature as a training tool where a trainer has two pupils who will get set up for a supervised bidding practice session.

You will be able to do this in the VBA Internet Room where a trainer could start up 3 PCs in the Internet Room and use one to define the teacher who would create a Partnership Bidding table as the Host.

The trainer will normally run the set up as follows:

1. Log on to BridgeBase using his/her login on a PC from which the training session will be monitored.
2. The trainer will bring up the Table Options screen to set the basic options for the training session.
3. Most importantly, the BridgeBase Usernames of the pupils will be entered into the North/South Reserved Seats in the appropriate boxes. Always specify that Permission is required to join for players when operating in this mode.
4. Then specify the bidding constraints as mentioned above. The trainer will determine these and may or may not tell the pupils what hand ranges to expect during the session.
5. Bring up the Opponents' Bidding dialog and select the Controlled by Host Option. This means that the trainer will be responsible for executing the bidding of the opponents.

Sometime the trainer will set GIB as the opponents for the session so the trainer can concentrate on things other than the defensive bidding.

Note that the trainer will be able to provide hints and commentary where appropriate during sessions.

There is the ability the save hands to file for later printing or review.

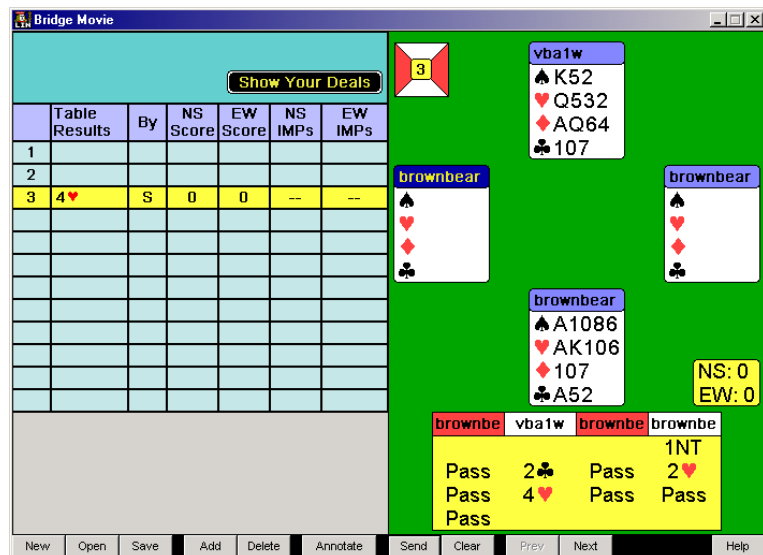
When this is a possibility, the player running the session should have a write device pugged into one of the computers – a memory stick is the best option if hands are to be taken away.

When entering opponent's bidding manually, the trainer can always bid the opponent's hands as if they were rearranged to provide one with a bid that would give the students a worthwhile problem. As the students cannot see the opponent's hands during bidding this is OK for the trainer.

Bridge Movies

You will often want to save hands for later review. The Bridge Movie functionality does this for you automatically but you need a little computer literacy to use it effectively. Never mind...

You bid the first hand and this screen comes up for the host:



Click on the board you are playing to see the details. You will work it all out after a while. Look at it and hit *Escape* to close the pop-up. This is the way you remove pop-ups from Windows Applications without using the mouse which can be tedious.

The player who is not in control (sometimes bridge players have to be the low guy on the totem pole...) will see the following screen:



The dialog has less display and control options and basically just allows the user to check out past hands in the current session. Look at it and hit *Escape*.

Saving Hands

Saving hands is easy – the software does it for you. However, you now need to have some computer savvy to make use of the files that are created.

If the paragraph above does not make you raise your eyebrows you may need some assistance – please ask your friends because all computer literate bridge players are keen to pass on their knowledge. Otherwise read on...

If you have installed your BridgeBase software using the defaults you will have the following directory structure on your computer:

```
C:\
|
|----- Bridge Base Online
|         |
|         |----- constraints
|         |
|         |----- hands
|         |         |
|         |         |----- fred
|         |         |----- you
```

Under the BridgeBase folder will be a **hands** folder which will in turn have all of the clowns that have been playing BBO on your computer shown. These folders may have files in them. Some of these may be recordings of Partnership Bidding Sessions.

Having got here you should know what the filenames look like. Samples are:

```
11-28-06-1.lin
11-28-06-2.lin
```

They are simply today's date with a session integer appended. As they are **.lin** files, those that understood me so far will know that they can be executed from Explorer and will be displayed using the executable file that displays Bridge Movies:

NetBridgeVu.exe

This file is why you must install BridgeBase on your computer – it is the beautiful engine that gives us pictorial hand representations from a simple text file input.

Enough. Just open the file to view it yourself or attach it to an EMail so someone else can view one or more of the hands and bidding. The rest is up to you...